



**According to the
Department of
Veterans Affairs,
suspicious activities
include:**

- Inquiries from companies you have not contacted or done business with.
- Purchases or charges on your accounts you did not make.
- New accounts you did not open or changes to your accounts you did not make.
- Denials of credit for no apparent reason.
- Bills that do not arrive as expected.

Scams against Veterans

Brave men and women of the Armed Forces have fought and defended our freedom and American way of life. Now they are fighting against con artists who want to steal their money and their dignity.

In May 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs learned of a data security breach. This data included “names, social security numbers, dates of birth and some disability ratings for up to 26.5 million veterans and some spouses.” The VA is urging all veterans to be extra vigilant and carefully monitor all “bank statements, credit card statements and any statements relating to recent financial transactions and to immediately report any suspicious or unusual activity.”

Another way to monitor your financial accounts is to review your credit report. By law you are entitled to one free credit report each year from each of the three major credit bureaus – Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. The contact information for these credit bureaus is:

- Equifax: (800) 685-1111, www.equifax.com
- Experian (formerly TRW): (888) 397-3742, www.experian.com
- TransUnion: (800) 888-4213, www.transunion.com

If you find any errors or inaccuracies, report them immediately to the credit bureau that generated the erroneous information. The VA has set up a manned call center that veterans may call to get information about the situation created by the recent data security breach. Veterans may call 1-800-333-4636 (FED-INFO) 8 am–9 pm (EDT) Monday-Saturday.

OTHER SCAMS

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Federal Trade Commission have recently issued warnings regarding two scams being perpetrated against Veterans. They are:

- Prescription Scam
- E-mail Scam

The Prescription Scam is occurring over the phone and on line. Veterans have received calls from someone identifying themselves as “Patient Care Group.” They tell the veterans that the VA recently changed procedures for dispensing prescriptions and ask for the veteran’s credit card number.

The VA issued a statement to veterans that “the VA has not changed its processes for dispensing prescription medicines.” This scam is currently centered in the Midwest.

EDWARD LEONARD

Franklin County Treasurer

Another form of the Prescription Scam takes place either on-line or by phone call. Someone posing as an employee of Medical Matrix, a medical claims clearing house, has been calling and/or e-mailing CHAMPVA beneficiaries to ask veterans to verify their private information. If you are contacted, please notify the VA Health Administration Center and the local authorities as soon as possible.

E-mail Scams are occurring with increasing frequency. According to the Federal Trade Commission, in the wake of the recent data security breach, it is possible that new e-mail scams against veterans may increase. The FTS warns veterans and their families to be on the alert for scammers. The FTC advises:

- Do not give out your personal information over the phone, in the mail, or over the internet unless you initiated the contact and know or can verify who you are dealing with.
- Never click on links sent in unsolicited e-mails. Instead, type in a Web address you know to be accurate.
- The VA, other government agencies, and legitimate businesses do not contact people by e-mail or telephone either to ask them for or to confirm Social Security numbers or other personal information.

The Veterans Service Center for Ohio is the Cleveland Regional Office, located at the A.J. Celebrezze Federal Building, 1240 East 9th Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44199. Veterans may contact the Service Center at 1-800-827-1000.

In Columbus, the Chalmers P. Wylie VA Outpatient Clinic offer many services for Veterans. It is located at 543 Taylor Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43203. Veterans can call the clinic at 614-257-5200 or 1-888-615-9448.